
Mr. *Hooker's*
S E R M O N

Occasioned by the Death

OF THE

Rev. Mr. *Hunt.*

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*A Vindication of divine conduct in the
death of important and useful persons.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
F U N E R A L
O F T H E

Rev. JOHN HUNT,

Pastor of the Old South Church in BOSTON:

Who died at his Father's House in NORTHAMPTON,

December 20th 1775.

Aged 31 Years.

And in the 5th Year of his MINISTRY.

By JOHN HOOKER, A.M.

Pastor of the Church in NORTHAMPTON.

"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt
" know hereafter." JOHN xiii. 7.

BOSTON, NEW-ENGLAND:

Printed by THOMAS and JOHN FLEET, 1776.

arch
tions

A Collection of letters containing
a variety of interesting and useful papers

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

CHURCH OF ST. MARY

ON THE

SUNDAY OF THE

TRINITY



Who died at his residence in Northampton

August 31st 1791

And in the 10th Year of his Majesty

BY JOHN HOOKER, A.M.

Minister of the Church in Northampton

I do not know, nor have I seen any
of the papers

BOSTON, NEW-ENGLAND

Printed by Thomas and John Green, 1792

A Funeral S E R M O N.

J O B XIV. 19.

—*Thou destroyest the hope of man.*

THESE are the words of *Job* in the most afflicted and calamitous condition we can well imagine a human creature to be in—bereaved as in a moment of all his children—stripped at once of a most plentiful fortune—his body from head to foot covered with the most noisome and painful sores. In the midst of this affliction, and in “the multitude of his thoughts within him;” you see him in the text raising his mind to God and his sovereign providence in the calamities of the world and destroying the hopes of men. He felt that he was born to trouble and grief, but knew that his “afflictions did not spring out of the ground” nor come upon him by chance; but a great all-operating wise hand invisibly directed every circumstance of his life and destroyed his hopes.

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THE first thing then that I shall observe in the text is, *the agency and hand of God in bringing afflictions and troubles upon men and destroying their hopes.* This Job acknowledges in the text, an efficacious all wise providence disposing the condition of every thing in the world, and particularly the disappointments and sorrows of mankind. He says in the beginning of the verse, "the waters wear the stones; thou wastest away the things that grow out of the earth:" i. e. by the common laws and operations of nature, thou continually changest the face and state of things in the visible world, and every, even the smallest alteration among material things is the effect of thine energy; — "and Thou destroyest the hope of man," — however we are bereaved or disappointed, — if our pleasing expectations are cut off, or the most flattering hopes blasted, it is by the stroke of thy hand; it is by one means or other, more or less directly, by thy influence that it comes upon us.

THIS is a lesson tho' very difficult, yet most necessary to be learnt by us when we are afflicted. It is easy indeed when we are quiet and at rest ourselves, to speculate upon divine providence and to acknowledge the hand of God in the afflictions of mankind; but when they come upon us personally and we are in distress, how often is the prospect changed, and how hardly do we realise it so as to be satisfied and acquiesce in it that 'tis by a wise just and good hand that we are disappointed and suffer! how much more naturally oftentimes does it seem to come rather from the gloomy relentless hand of fate and chance! And yet if we attend either to the voice of reason or the language

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language of scripture, both point us to a divine hand, and assure us that "there is no evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it." If our affliction came upon us by mere accident and fate there could be no room for any relief of mind from any consideration of wisdom or goodness,—no way to comfort but by shutting our eyes and endeavouring to resist all uneasy feelings of grief; and by a mere stoutness of spirit submitting to our fate with as stoic an insensibility as possible.—Heathen may rid themselves of sorrow in this manner; but the comfort and support of christians ought to arise from a very different quarter, even from a cheerful acquiescence in the justice, wisdom and love of God, "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will."

Secondly. We may next consider what *Job* has reference to in particular as the *way in which* God destroys the hope of man: that is *death* or the destruction of man's life. There are a thousand ways in which God destroys men's hopes: but this is what *Job* seems to have his eye especially upon in the text, even his cutting off their life and so destroying their hope. This you will see by observing the context: speaking of man he says, "his days are determined and the number of his months are with thee—there is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will spring again;—but man dieth and wasteth away, yea man giveth up the ghost and where is he? as the waters fail from the sea and the flood drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not until the heavens be no more; they shall not," i. e. till then, "awake or be raised out of their sleep:—and thou destroyest the
" hope

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"hope of man," that is, in this manner, and by bringing him to death. And it is added "thou prevailedst for ever against him and he passeth; thou changest his countenance and sendest him away." And so God destroys men's hope, by destroying their life. Whereupon,

Thirdly. It may be enquired *what is the hope that God thereby destroys?* It may mean the hope that depends either on *our own* life or the life of *others*;—the hope of the *dying* man or of them that *survive* him. The *hope of man* in both these senses is destroyed by death.

1. By death God destroys *the hope of the dying man.* The hope of the living in this world extends to all kinds of agreeable objects which men can desire, both *temporal* and *eternal*. This hope, in its *greatest extent*, may be destroyed by death.—As to the *godly* man indeed, *his* hope shall never "make him ashamed," "the foundation of it standeth sure:" "the righteous hath a hope in his death" which God will never destroy; but by cutting off his life, will *accomplish* his utmost desires, and *exceed* his highest expectations. The moment of death will put an end to all his fears and doubts and trembling apprehensions of the king of terrors. Death puts it forever out of it's own power and the power of every thing else to hurt him.—But as to the *ungodly* and the *hypocrite*, God by "taking away his soul" destroys all his hopes both of earth and heaven, at once, and forever. "The eyes of the wicked shall fail and they shall not escape: and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." †

But

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BUT it seems to be the hope of *things earthly*, and the prospect of worldly felicity, that is especially meant in the text, by the *hope* that God destroys: and if we take the *hope* here mentioned to signify the hope of *the dying person*, it must mean the hope of riches and pleasures and honors of this world—of friends and relations—or the hope of usefulness and doing good in the world. These are more or less the *hope* of men according to their several ages connexions or dispositions.

ONE hopes for the enjoyment of *ease* and sensitive *pleasure*; another to grow *rich* and live in *elegance* and plenty: one lays out to rise to *preferment* and honor; another to enjoy a great deal of satisfaction in *relations and friends*; while some have the nobler prospect and hope of being eminently *useful* and doing good to the bodies or spirits of men and contributing something towards the happiness of the world or the interest of Christ and his father's kingdom.—By death God destroys all these hopes: whatever are men's purposes, whatever their contrivances for their own gratification in life, or for the good of others, "in that very day their thoughts perish." Again,

2. By death God also destroys *the hope of the living*. He cuts off the hope of *survivors* by the death of persons from whom they have *peculiar expectations*;—men of eminent usefulness and importance, who afford a pleasing hope of comfort and profit to their friends, to particular families or towns; to church or state, and the country where they live.

THE present solemn occasion calls us to consider the text particularly in this light. When persons appear

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appear of a benevolent and kind spirit, of knowledge and activity, of singular piety or public spirit, and much furniture and ability and disposition to do good, we naturally make them the *objects of hope* and conceive agreeable expectations from them, according as we have any special relation or connection with them.

—*Parents* of such a disposition are the hope and glory of their children: *Children* of such a character and capacity are peculiarly the hope of their parents, and the hope of the family they belong to. This is more especially the case when such relatives act in a more public character and move in a more distinguished sphere of life;* and have special opportunities for exerting their capacity and disposition for usefulness; and are in the prime and flower of life and the midst of service.

Such are singularly the *hope* of their friends—the hope of a town and community:—such *magistrate* are the hope of a state; the strength and safety and glory of the public.—Such *ministers* are the hope of their people and the joy of the churches.

By the cutting off such, God in a very peculiar manner *destroyeth the hope of man*. The present solemn dispensation of Providence that has called us together, is an affecting instance and illustration of this truth. This day, my brethren, is this scripture fulfilled before our eyes; and is often fulfilled. Men of distinguished usefulness and importance, that are just entered upon the stage of public service, and to appearance

* *Mr. Prince's Sermon* on the death of the Prince of Wales; to which the reader is indebted for the hint of several thoughts under this and the former head.

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appearance might be long and singularly useful ; such are often cut down in the meridian, or even the morning of life, and at times when they seem to be most of all needed ; while thousands, as trees barren and dead and burdens to the earth, are left standing. Wherefore our next enquiry from the text shall be,

Fourthly. WHAT may be supposed *the reasons and ends of divine providence* in such a dispensation, and thus destroying the hopes of men.

DISPENSATIONS of this sort are among the mysteries of divine providence, and seem to cover the ways of God with clouds and darkness ; and though there may be many ends God has in view, to which we shall remain strangers at present, yet with great propriety we may humbly enquire into the reasons of divine conduct in this matter, and what there is to justify the wisdom of it ; and what good ends may be answered in thus taking away “ the excellent of the earth ” — “ the precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold,” and in the midst of their days ; — in a particular manner, *ministers of Christ*, of singular capacities, and in the height of their usefulness. In such a view I shall just hint several considerations.

1. By such dispensations God teaches us *how independent he is of every creature* ; and how little he is beholden to any particular instrument to accomplish his designs. This is a strong display of the divine sovereignty and self sufficiency, and how much he is above *needing* any one's help. Though he condescends to use particular persons as instruments of accomplishing important purposes, yet he would shew

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us that he is *beholden* to none; he can take them away without loss to himself. The men he makes most useful in his kingdom and who seem most important to it; the great King would have to know, that he don't *need* them; and he would teach them not to consider themselves as of any *importance to him*: and so, tho' he condescends to use them he would humble them, and "hide pride from man." Hereby God exalts *himself* in the view of the world, in his own independent glory and blessedness. "It is a piece of divine royalty and magnificence that when he has prepared and polished such a utensil so as to be capable of great service, he can lay it by without loss to himself."†

2. By such dark dispensations, God would *exercise and try our submission to his sovereignty and wisdom*; and whether we can acquiesce in the ways of his providence when they are most dark and unaccountable. To submit and be satisfied in the divine wisdom and faithfulness in dispensations peculiarly grievous, and have the heart quieted by an implicit confidence that he is wise and just and good when he destroys our hopes, and the footsteps of his providence are most surrounded with darkness, this is eminently "glorifying him as God," and doing singular honor to our heavenly father:—hardly any thing more strongly evidences the sincerity of our hearts towards him. By such dispensations God *tries* his people in this matter, and whether we believe and can submit and comfort ourselves in the wisdom and goodness of his providence, when there is the least *appearance* of merciful and wise design.—This we may consider

† Mr. Howe.

as

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as one important end of such instances of divine conduct as this before us; to prove the *faith* of his churches and exercise their *submission* to his sovereignty and wisdom.

3. God also hereby teaches us "*to cease from man*" and *to moderate our dependance upon creatures that seem most important to us*. Such providences preach, with peculiar emphasis, the vanity of every thing mortal, however promising it's appearance, and the danger of trusting that upon which we seem most dependant. God would hereby abate the ardor of our affections to this poor impoverished world, by eclipsing the glory of those objects that most attract them; he plucks away the pillars of our earthly hope, that he may convince us that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." "When the bloom of youth, says one, or the prime of manhood, great intellectual abilities and acquired accomplishments, distinguished piety and usefulness, are cut off, in such a providence we hear that cry sounding with irresistible energy, "all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever."† If the best we meet with on earth is thus fugitive and uncertain and may be soon gone from us forever, then "verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." The pearls and jewels of our world may be as soon taken from us, as the dirt and dross.

† Isai. xl. 6. 7.

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dress. "There is mortality, there is death in my choicest enjoyments." This teaches our expectations to cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils—from friends and the dearest relatives, and from ministers of the most distinguished abilities and importance. How ~~vain~~ a world is this, where nothing excellent lives and continues long—where our noblest enjoyments are always slipping out of our hands.

4. Such providences tend to *endear heaven to us and direct our hearts upwards*. They lead us to exalted and delightful thoughts of that blessed state, where all that is good and great in our world is collecting together. One end God may have in such dispensations is to wean our affections from this dying world by interesting them in a better. Our minds, always too prone to the earth, need every incentive to love and desire "that better country, that is, the heavenly ; and *this* God designs as one. When men of singular goodness and importance cease from the earth, they are not lost : God would have us follow them up, in our minds, to that glorious state ; and our love and desire towards it ought, in all reason, to enkindle at the thought.—The presence of our Redeemer and the enjoyment of the ever blessed God is indeed the supreme felicity of that world ; but the society of angels and "the spirits of just men made perfect," and to "sit down in the company of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God," the scripture leads us to consider as one subordinate source of the happiness of that state.—By means of the death of such men, this earth becomes the *less*, and heaven the *more* desirable and glorious : what this world loses, heaven gains.

To

A FUNERAL SERMON. 99

To have the righteous removed thither, while our hearts are warm with a sense of their worth and excellence, and while we are experiencing their goodness and usefulness and rejoicing in them as the "excellent of the earth," tends to leads us to more pleasant and vivid thoughts of what a glorious heaven that is where all that is important and dear to us is collecting: we naturally look up to it as a glorious and desirable state. And if we improve their death in this manner as we ought and might, it may be more useful to us than their life: it is worth while to have them taken from us, for our part, if our affections may be carried to heaven with them. — Should God let all the righteous stand till they are withered with age and become unprofitable and incapable of doing any good, and burdens to the earth, and the sense of their former importance and excellence was lost, a blind world might be too apt to have less affectionate thoughts of the glory of that heaven, where none were assembled but such withered unprofitable creatures as were almost forgot. The more precious and dear to us those persons are who are gone to heaven, the more precious and desirable heaven will naturally seem to us. — If we were to have *our wills*, we should have all the godly and useful men among us live till they were out of date and good for nothing for this world, and the world was willing to get rid of them: and then how much less attractive thoughts would people be apt to have of a heaven made up of such as were unfit to live upon earth any longer. But when we see men go away to that world while we are full of a present relish and affectionate esteem of their excellence and worth, and long to have them continued with us, our hearts are
naturally

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naturally drawn thither after them, and conceive more pleasant thoughts and desires after that glorious state; and our affections are crucified to this poor low liv'd miserable world.—It tends to warm our hearts with desire to do something to promote the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

5. God may cut off persons of eminent importance for a warning to others of their *own death*: and to awaken them to greater diligence in their work and preparation for their own dismissal. Particularly, the death of a *minister* of distinguish'd abilities and usefulness, or whose life seems of singular importance; is a peculiar admonition of this sort to those that survive: for if such are cut down—if the best and those that seem prepar'd by divine providence and grace to do the most good in the world, yet are not spared from death, who is safe? When the most *distinguished and useful* in God's vineyard are called off in the midst of their work to give up their account, who of us has not reason to take heed to himself? Who of us is secure, when those are cut down, for the continuance of whose life there seem'd most reason? When the *most conspicuous* fall, let the rest beware.—The ministers of Christ need pungent admonitions to keep alive the sense of death and our great account, that we may be kept active and solicitous to "save ourselves and them that hear us."—To awaken us for this purpose, is one wise and benevolent design of God in such providences as we now speak of: one minister is cut off to awaken the vigilance of the rest.

6. MEN

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6. MEN of usefulness and importance may be cut off as a *token of God's displeasure against the town or country where they lived.* It may be construed as a warning from God of approaching evil and to awaken people to fear and prepare to meet him.—In it's very nature, the death of such persons is a public rebuke,—an afflictive loss and calamity : God takes away their choicest blessings and means it for a present scourge upon a people for their wickedness and misimprovement of such blessings. And not only so, but their death may be considered as a frequent *forerunner* of some public calamity near ; and has a threatening aspect in this view. When God takes away those that were the *friends and intercessors* of a country, it has the appearance of refusing to be intreated and plead with any more. When those that stood in the gap to avert his judgments are removed, it looks as tho' the way was open for his wrath to break forth : it is remarked concerning the prophet Elisha's death, that at such a time " he died ; and the Moabites invaded the land at " the coming in of the year." When ambassadors are called home, it threatens a rupture : when God calls off his ambassadors in the midst of their service and usefulness, it looks like *breaking off* the treaty of reconciliation : there are wrathful aspects in the face of his providence : and he would have a secure land take the alarm. He designs it for their awakening in order to their final good.

7. THE *righteous may be taken away from the evil to come.* And so it may be in mercy to them ; however it may be in wrath to the world, or the country whence they are taken. " Doves fly home

" 10"

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"to their windows before a storm." God houses his children and favorites safely when a tempest is approaching, and takes them out of the world for the same reason he took Lot out of Sodom. The grave is his hiding place where he often secures his special friends, till all the calamities and storms of this world are overpast: "then shall he call and they shall answer." —

By the death of his saints God gratifies his love and complacency in them: he don't cut them off from the earth in wrath *to them*, but that he may glorify them with himself: — "they shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds." And while *we* are groveling in this dark world, like moles in the earth, with our hearts in the dust, and our minds busied about these poor terrestrial objects, their souls are got to rest in the bosom of their God, and rejoice and shout for their release from this region of darkness and sorrow, as a bird escaped from the snare. Though they often trembled at the thought of death and feared the issue of it, yet they have now passed the dark gulph safely; and with transport unutterable, find themselves safe on the heavenly shore and in the presence of Jesus.

8. God removes his most faithful servants *because he has occasion for them elsewhere*, and to serve some nobler purposes in his kingdom than they are capable of here. While they seem to perish and are *destroyed* and lost to our world, they are only exalted and promoted to some more important employment in the heavenly country. While God deprives the world of them, he is most effectually accomplishing his own purposes

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purposes of wisdom and love in his great kingdom ; tho' to us he may seem to be frustrating them. When in finishing some large and curious building, an ignorant spectator sees the master builder hewing in pieces the best of his boards and timbers ; from his ignorance it might naturally enough seem to him that the man was destroying and wasting his choicest materials instead of wisely accomplishing his design. It is just as much from our ignorance and blindness that it seems to us the blessed God is counteracting his own wisdom and love, in cutting down the wise and the learned, the pious and industrious successful labourers in his vineyard in the midst of their days. But he that has the keys of the invisible world and of death, knows what he is about ; he can and he will employ them to far better purposes elsewhere. What they were doing here and the good purposes they served on earth, was not the main design of their existence : they were made for a higher end and for some nobler use ; and when God has occasion for them elsewhere he will take them away without asking our leave or giving any account of his matters,—though we wonder what he means by it, and are apt to think he is weakening his own cause. He only removes a workman from a lower to a higher employment. Let us leave God to accomplish his work in his own way : he will do well enough without our advice ; he needs none of our counsel. *Our part* is to submit and adore and do our duty ; and we may be sure all things will issue well in the end, "according to the counsel of his will." In this way, tho' "we know not what he does now, yet we shall know hereafter."

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THUS I have considered several things which may be supposed to be some of the reasons and ends of the divine conduct in *destroying the hopes of men*, by cutting off persons of distinguished usefulness and importance in the midst of their service : and this may do something to quiet and satisfy us concerning such an event ; and affords matter of improvement and instruction upon the sad occasion of the present day. The providence of God in the instance before us, affords a striking example and illustration of Job's remark in the text.

HERE is now before this assembly, the remains, and all that could die, of one that with great propriety might be called *the hope of man* ; one from whom the public had raised expectations ; who shone in a distinguished sphere of life and with eminent lustre—a burning and a shining light ; one of singular accomplishments and furniture for usefulness in the church of Christ ; one that was the *hope* of his parents and the comfort of the family ; the hope of his native town—lately the hope of *Boston*,—the hope of these *New-English churches*.—But now he is cut down as a flower, and withered in the morning of life : his sun, before it reached the meridian is set in darkness.

A grateful acknowledgment to the glorious head of the church, for the *life* of such a man, and a tear of lamentation and sorrow for his, to us, untimely *death*, is due from us all upon this occasion :—is due from this town,—is due from his country,—is due in a particular manner from me. Most willingly, but with sincere grief do I perform this last service, and pay

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pay this last tribute to the memory of our departed friend.—I have long had an intimate acquaintance with him, and opportunity to know his temper and sentiments and the undissembled disposition and turn of his mind : and the more I knew him the more I esteemed him, and the more dear *to me* he was.—Being a native of this town, his *character* is well known to most of you, so that there is less occasion for being particular :—some farther account of him however, may be justly expected on this solemnity.

THE father of spirits had endued him with an amiable natural disposition, a modest, sweet pacific temper; and superior natural genius and intellectual powers, improved and adorned by many valuable acquirements; which the good spirit inclined him to consecrate to the service of God in the gospel of his Son. Within these eight or ten years past, a great revolution has taken place in the moral state of his mind: it pleased God to touch his heart with a serious attention to matters of religion and his own eternal well being. After various painful solitudes and enquiries concerning the character of the blessed God and his conduct towards mankind—the real *divinity* of the gospel and the doctrines he saw it contain—and the true ground of a sinner's hope towards God, he gained a good degree of satisfaction in his own mind, as to these things, and embraced the gospel as divinely true and the sovereign only relief of his own spirit: he thereupon devoted himself to studying and preaching it to others.

HE

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He entered into the christian ministry from principles of conscience; but with much diffidence and much selfdenial;—his natural disposition leading him to a more active course, and well knowing that a sedentary studious life was unfriendly to his health, he yet preferred this to a much more lucrative business which offered itself to his choice in competition with it.—He dared not neglect making trial at least, of preaching the gospel. In the year 1769 he began to preach with uncommon acceptance: the approbation he met with encouraged him to continue: till providence, after some time, opened the way for his settlement at *Boston*, Sept. 25, 1771: where he continued his public labours, with great acceptance both to his own congregation and the people of the town in general—till the fatal 19th of April last.

INDEED his public services as long as he lived every where met with singular approbation; he was truly a “workman that needed not to be ashamed.” In *prayer* he was peculiarly copious, grave and solemn, with an unusual variety and pertinency of sentiment and language: and perhaps in no part of public exercise did he more excel than in this. As a *preacher* he was eminent: his *compositions* were correct, manly and elegant; his *sermons* were rational, judicious and instructive—*enriched* with striking and important sentiments—*adorned* with a variety and noble turn of thought—*enlivened* by a strong animated and delicate style—*recommended* by a delivery remarkably grave, deliberate and emphatical, with a pathos and energy becoming the pulpit, and calculated to give every idea he meant to convey, its full weight upon the mind.

His

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His imagination was lively and conducted with judgment. He had a ready invention, with a singular dexterity in collecting well judg'd images and metaphors, and contrasting ideas and expressions so as to engage the hearer. A lively and beautiful imagery usually appeared in all his compositions. He appeared fully possessed in his own thoughts of what he aimed to express; and to endeavor to convey it to the understanding and heart of his hearers; so that he usually commanded the attention of his auditory in an uncommon degree. It ever appeared to be his principal concern in his public discourses, *to do good*: he was solicitous to instruct the mind and affect the heart;—not merely to please; but to please in order to profit;—not to amuse his hearers with the empty sound of language or the speculations of philosophy, but to “feed them with that knowledge and understanding” which should save their souls.

He loved and he preached the peculiar doctrines of the gospel as they were understood by the fathers of this country, but with a most agreeable openness and candor of mind. The doctrine of *redemption thro' a mediator and atoning sacrifice* he was particularly attached to and dwelt much upon it in the course of his life; and and it was the hope and comfort of his heart in death.

His health had long been tender and his constitution *hectical*: at length, the want of exercise and the fatigue of study and public service, prevailed to throw him into an incurable *consumption*, of which he died. He had felt the approaches of this disorder in the course of the summer past, and well knew where it
would

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would end. He set himself to prepare for the all-important change. His attention was exceedingly arrested by the prospect of giving up his great account. In the fore part of his illness, his mind was oppressed with darkness and doubts and anxious enquiries about his *sincerity*: he was exceedingly solicitous to get full satisfaction in that matter: he could not rest such an awful concern upon uncertainties. In the latter part of his illness he was much relieved and satisfied, and attained a good degree of rest in his own spirit; and for many weeks before his death, he lived in comfortable hope of "being with Christ, which is far better." He discoursed largely and freely upon divine things, till within these two or three weeks past, his strength and spirits failed him, so that he said very little, only in short answers to questions that were put to him.

AND thus he has "finished his course, and his spirit is returned to God that gave it."—*Thou destroyest the hope of man.* O! let us all look about us and lay it to heart that it will soon be our own turn. And will "the Lord grant unto us that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day."

THE bereaved *parents* of the deceased, with their *surviving children*, will permit me in a particular manner to address myself to them upon this occasion. You, my dear friends, are the persons principally concerned and affected by this solemn providence. God has *destroyed your hope*, and withered one that was a glory and honor to the family: he has taken him from the earth forever:—You are to welcome his returning face no more.

MAY

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MAY the afflicted *parents* in particular say, "the will of the Lord be done." We hope you can now freely resign him up to *him* who, you well know, gave him an existence, not for *your sakes* principally but for *his own*, who "made all things for himself:" and now his sovereign proprietor has occasion to employ him in some other part of his kingdom, we trust you can freely yield him, and say, "blessed be the name of the Lord." Mourners ought ever to remember that, in the *birth* or *death* of their dearest friends, God has something higher in view than merely *pleasing* or *afflicting* them: If God freely delivered up *his only son* to death for us all, can you think it much, or should you grudge to resign *one of your's* when he calls for it? If by cutting off this branch of your hope on earth God shall add to "the hope that is laid up for you in heaven,"—shall teach you to be more resigned and humble, and look for less from this world, and to rest and live more entirely on himself as the object of your eternal hope;—if by this means the minds of your surviving *children* may be touched, and led to effectual preparation for their own death and eternal state; you may well reckon it among the most merciful of God's dealings towards you and your family. It is worth while to have the cistern broken if you may by that means be led to the fountain;—so shall "the day of his death be better to you than the day of his birth."

To the surviving *brethren and sisters* this is a sore affliction, and a painful disappointment of their hopes; but let me beseech you to be concerned, not merely to *afflict* yourselves in the thought of it, but if possible

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to obtain some real and everlasting *good* to your souls from it. By sending death among you the blessed God teaches you that you also are mortal; and writes *Vanity* upon youth and all it's gaities and pleasures. This is our Lord's voice to you in this providence, "be ye also ready:"† he admonishes you to be *wise* before it is too late, and seek the efficacious knowledge of that gospel and that savior which was the hope and support of your deceased *brother* in the nearest views of eternity. Death and the invisible world have been long brought near to you, and as it were set open to your view from month to month, while you have seen this dear relative long upon the borders of the eternal state, and considering himself so, and speaking to you as it were from the grave. O! remember what you heard and saw in him; and long may it affect and guide your hearts; may it impress upon your spirits that sense of eternity, and the unutterable importance of *Christ* and the *Gospel*, which shall stick close to your minds and follow you every day you live in the world.—So may his sickness and death be better to you than his life.

WITH great pleasure, was it in my power, I should now address myself to the *bereaved flock*, broken and scattered and without a shepherd;—driven by cruel violence far from their own homes;—their *house of prayer*, which they left behind, vilely prostituted to the most disgraceful uses;—their beloved *pastor* now cut off by death; when he was far from any of his flock,

* The youngest sister died about a month after, of the canker aged 18 years. -

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flock, and none of them near him to close his eyes or follow him to the grave.—Such is the sovereign disposal of the only wise God.

THE dealings of providence have been peculiar of late years towards that church and congregation. Though they have been from the beginning favored with a bright series of burning and shining lights, whose praise is still in all the churches;* yet of late they have been bereaved in a very uncommon manner. Mr. Hunt is the *sixth* pastor of that church that has been separated from it within seventeen years. *Two* were dismissed yet living: He is the *fourth* that has been taken away by death in that time; — Mr. *Prince* in the year 1758; — Mr. *Cumming* in 1763; — Dr. *Sewall* in the year 1769: — last of all, this our deceased friend and servant of Christ, whose remains we are now to commit to the dust. And now the church and congregation itself, together with the rest of that miserable town, is scattered abroad to the four quarters of the country. But Christ the redeemer of his people still lives and reigns, and has “all power in Heaven and in Earth given into his hand.”

D 2

—Pity,

* “The holy *Thacher*—The judicious *Willard*—The accomplished *Pemberton*—The learned *Prince*—The penetrating *Cumming*—Men who will be had in everlasting remembrance. But among all these great and good men, there is none whose name I mention with more pleasure, or whose memory deserves greater respect from you, than that of the excellent Dr. *Sewall*, who during the course of fifty-six years, was your faithful and laborious pastor, and whose venerable head so lately adorned this desk.”

Dr. Eliot's right-hand of fellowship at the ordination of Mr. Hunt.

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— Pity them, O thou compassionate head of the church, and “gather them in thine arms and carry them in thy bosom” and return them to their own habitations ; and again “send forth laborers into thine harvest.”

THE *Ministers of Christ* here present will suffer me to “stir up their minds by way of remembrance” upon this occasion and from this solemn providence. My brethren, we are all mortal ; in this glass, we see it in strong colours. “We also must shortly put off this tabernacle, as our Lord Jesus Christ is now shewing us :” Oh that we might watch for souls as they that *believe* it. To us very particularly, to *Ministers* is our Lord’s voice by this providence especially directed,—*be ye also ready*. We see that neither youth nor virtue nor any degree of usefulness or reputation can be the least security :—here is one before us who had all *these* to secure him, and yet he is fallen a prey to death. His season of life and usefulness and preparation is over, and he is gone to give up his account to our common master. While *our* day lasts let *us* by this be admonished to use it, if possible, to do *some good*, before we are called off from our work : if ever we aim to live to any purpose or do any good in the world, now is our opportunity. God designs *this providence* to awaken us to live and study and pray and preach as dying men to dying creatures.

We have multiplied admonitions of this sort and particularly in the course of *this year*, a year remarkable for the death of ministers !—And while such *uncommon* numbers of our fellow labourers are called home from every

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every quarter to give up their account, should we not take heed to ourselves and our flocks, since it will soon be too late to profit *them* or take any effectual care of *ourselves*? Shall we slumber over our work when our own *account* is so near and so great—so strict and solemn; and our *negligence* may be attended with consequences so ruinous and tremendous to ourselves and others?—What storms are gathering over this country we know not, while God is calling home so many of his servants and hiding them in the grave, perhaps “from the evil to come.” Ministers and people, being “moved with fear” should be solicitous every one for himself to “prepare an ark”—rather, fly to the ark already prepared, that we may be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.

ONE word to the *assembly* in general shall conclude the whole. We live in a world where in one way or other God is continually *destroying our hopes*; let us therefore seek “a kingdom that cannot be moved.” Every thing is mortal in this world where sin has entered: where *sin* reigns *death* cannot but reign. The most “excellent of the earth,” the wisest and the best of mankind of every rank and character must die; the most faithful and important embassadors of God to men are as mortal as any. “The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!” † “Cease then from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of? Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” Beware of trusting the glittering objects
of

† Lam. iv. 2.

of this deceitful world, which *insures* nothing to it's *children* but disappointment, when durable riches and an eternal unfading inheritance in the heavenly country is set before us. In lively accents we are told that we are dying creatures, and our own turn will soon come. *We* must all presently know what it is to die. And oh! how shall we support that awful day! What *can* support the heart of a dying creature?—The *gospel*—the *blessed gospel* that brings salvation.—That word “of God that cannot lie” invites and *warrants* us to “commit our souls into the hand of *Jesus*, who has offered himself to God a sacrifice for the guilty, and whose office it is to keep what we commit to him, unto the great day. And is not that enough? what can a dying creature desire more? This gospel contains that which if we “believe it with the heart” will *save* us, and give quietness and rest even in the shadow of death. Attend to it therefore and study it as your life and the foundation of your eternal hope: there can be no comfort for us *now* or *then*, but from what this gospel declares. “Look unto *Jesus* and be saved all ye ends of the earth. Rise and be of good cheer, for lo he calleth thee.”

Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood,—be glory and dominion forever and ever,

A M E N.
